

56 The African Elephant

The elephant is the largest of all land animals. It can reach a height of eleven feet and weigh nearly six tons. The African elephant can also boast the biggest ears in the world. They can grow as large as three-and-a-half feet across. You might think that a gigantic animal like the elephant wouldn't have much to worry about, but it has its problems too. And its huge ears can help it to deal with many problems ranging from pesky insects to great danger.

The ears are very effective fans that can be used to swat flies. The elephants' huge ears also help them hear everything that's happening nearby. A mother elephant might hear the approach of a dangerous lion that would kill her calves.

The elephants' great size can sometimes present a heat problem. The larger an object, the harder it is for it to lose heat. Elephants live on the hot plains of Africa, where keeping cool is not an easy task. Elephants' huge ears help them cool their bodies so they can survive in the heat. The large surfaces of the ears have many blood vessels that are very close to the surface of the skin. Blood that is closer to the surface cools more easily.

The most impressive use of the ears, though, is seen in an elephant's threat display. When trying to threaten another animal, the elephant bellows and charges with both ears spread wide. This makes the huge beast look almost twice as large as it really is. Few enemies would dare to stand up to anything that colossal.

Main Idea

1

	Answer	Score
Mark the <i>main idea</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<u>15</u>
Mark the statement that is <i>too broad</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> B	<u>5</u>
Mark the statement that is <i>too narrow</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> N	<u>5</u>
a. Large ears help animals survive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
b. African elephants lose heat through their ears.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
c. The huge ears of African elephants help them in many ways.	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Score 15 points for each correct answer.

Score

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|---|-------|
| Subject Matter | 2 | Another good title for this passage would be
<input type="checkbox"/> a. Survival on the African Plains.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. They're All Ears.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Keeping Cool in Africa.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. The Elephant's Threat Display. | _____ |
| Supporting Details | 3 | The African elephant's large ears help it to
<input type="checkbox"/> a. hide.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. cool off.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. find food.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. control its young. | _____ |
| Conclusion | 4 | We can conclude that if elephants did not have big ears they would probably
<input type="checkbox"/> a. see better.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. be smaller.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. not be able to survive.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. not live in Africa. | _____ |
| Clarifying Devices | 5 | The author calls the elephant's threat display "impressive." This means that it is
<input type="checkbox"/> a. interesting.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. admirable.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. amusing.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. normal. | _____ |
| Vocabulary in Context | 6 | <u>Colossal</u> indicates that the elephant appears
<input type="checkbox"/> a. extremely angry.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. incredibly large.
<input type="checkbox"/> c. to be moving very fast.
<input type="checkbox"/> d. amazingly strong. | _____ |

Add your scores for questions 1–6. Enter the total here and on the graph on page 217.

Total
Score